

# ELKHORN FACILITY



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**Clifford Grimes, J.C.O.**  
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**Anthony DeLanda, Sr. J.C.O.**  
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# Elkhorn Correctional Facility



**Leslie Knobel**, Probation Services Manager / Assistant Director of the Elkhorn Boot Camp Program and the Elkhorn Delta Program.

Established in December 1997, with the opening of its first barracks capable of housing 50 non-violent minors, the Elkhorn Correctional Facility Boot Camp has now been fully operational for approximately 4 ½ years. A second barracks was opened in June 1998, adding 50 additional beds. Based upon the facility meeting all state and county regulations, the California State Board of Corrections, in early 1999, granted permission for Elkhorn to be the first camp in the state allowed to exceed a population cap of 100 minors. With the Board of Correction's authorization, a third 50-bed barracks came on-line in October 1999. The fourth 50-bed barracks was completed in April 2000 to house the more serious offenders. The original boot camp program was modified providing a boot camp style program for the serious offender, and is known as the Delta Program. The Elkhorn Correctional Facility is now the largest Boot Camp in California with a rated capacity of 200 male minors.

During the first year of operation, the average daily population at the Elkhorn Correctional Facility was 69 male minors. During the second year of operation, the average daily population increased to 109, and averaged 170 during the third year of operation. This last year of operation with all fourth barracks operational, the facility maintained an average population of 186 male minors. To address the issue of female minors needing long term incarceration in a Boot Camp style program, the contract with the Madera County Probation Department continued, allowing up to ten female minors from Fresno County to participate in their co-ed Boot Camp Program.

## Boot Camp Program

The Boot Camp Program (150-beds) is the original program started in December 1997, an intermediate sanction for non-violent offenders. The program is structured under a traditional military model, which incorporates strenuous physical activity, military drill/ceremony, and discipline. Its primary mission is to hold delinquent minors accountable for their criminal acts through 5 ½ to 6 ½ months of physical confinement. Its secondary goal is to impart education, leadership building skills, positive decision making and above all, a sense of self-control and self-accountability in the cadets. The on-site school program offers a solid general educational curriculum, special education, GED preparation and college courses. Last year 44 minors earned their GED or diplomas at Elkhorn. In the spring of this year, a Culinary Arts



program was added, offering a basic competency curriculum, a curriculum equivalent to any Junior College culinary program. Other program components at Boot Camp include drug education, victim-awareness classes, community service, gang redirection efforts and strong mental health programming in anger management, control of stress, and positive socialization skills. Family involvement is also encouraged, which serves to strengthen the home environment and the parents' communication skills, supervision/control skills, and overall parenting skills. All of these features and program enhancements, along with a strong Aftercare component affording intensive community supervision is designed to build young men who are capable of making better decisions which will help them lead a crime-free and productive life.

## Delta Program

The fourth 50-bed barracks houses the Delta Program which offers a program for serious offenders, including violent offenders, minors with more than 3 separate offenses, and minors who have failed the Boot Camp Program (non-violent minors) in custody or Aftercare program.

The Delta Program incorporates most of the regular Boot Camp Program components but is eight to twelve months in length and does not allow the personal, unsupervised movement within or outside the Elkhorn Facility which is allowed to the Boot Camp cadets who have earned high stages and demonstrated self-control and accountability. The Delta Program cadets are under closer direct staff supervision as they have displayed a previous lack of trustworthiness and self-control along with a more serious gang mentality, which causes them to pose a physical threat to other minors and staff. The Delta Program has been operational for slightly over two years and upon completion of the program the minors are promoted to the same Aftercare programs as the Boot Camp Program.

## Aftercare Program and the Forward Bound Academy

In February 1999, the Fresno County Board of Education received a state-funded grant of \$250,000 per year for five years to implement a program to assist high-risk youth in Fresno. This program, known as the Forward Bound Academy, is located on the old Teilman Community Campus. In cooperation with the Fresno County Probation Department, the Board of Education implemented this program to focus on the young men being released from the Elkhorn Correctional Facility back into the community. Consideration for attendance was based on criteria that the minor's residence was within the Fresno City limits and their inability to return to mainstream school because of their prior academic or behavioral performance. Approximately 80-85% of the cadets released from the Boot Camp and Delta programs are required to attend this program. The program is an eight-hour day, with structured academics, work experience, and job placement. This program completed its fourth year of operation June 30, 2002.

The Forward Bound Academy has had great success with daily attendance averaging approximately 60 students per day. The attendance record is good in light of the fact that the majority of the students attended

little or no school prior to their commitment to Elkhorn. A Probation Officer and Probation Technician are paid through grant funding to provide a high level of supervision, and to provide immediate accountability for those youth who violate the Court's orders or re-offend with a new criminal charge. Academically, many of the cadets have been able to build upon their achievements while at the Elkhorn Correctional Facility by continuing at the Forward Bound Academy upon release. During the past fiscal year, 31 Cadets earned their high school diploma, and four Cadets earned their General Education Diploma (GED). This is a life changing accomplishment for many of these young men and points to the quality of the accredited educational programming at the Elkhorn Correctional Facility and the Forward Bound Academy.

Minors and former minors, who do not meet the eligibility criteria for the Forward Bound Academy upon release from Elkhorn, are placed on an intensive supervision caseload managed by two Probation Officers. The first 90-days of Aftercare, minors/former minors are monitored electronically while they attend their home school, and/or employment. All efforts are made to provide the structure, assistance, and supervision necessary to keep them focused on a crime free lifestyle and being a success in their community. Aftercare supervision and services are approximately one year in length.



## BOARD BRIEFING REPORT

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**DATE:** March 25, 2002

**TO:** Fresno County Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Larry R. Price, Chief Probation Officer

**SUBJECT:** Elkhorn Correctional Facility Fourth Year Report

### **Executive Summary**

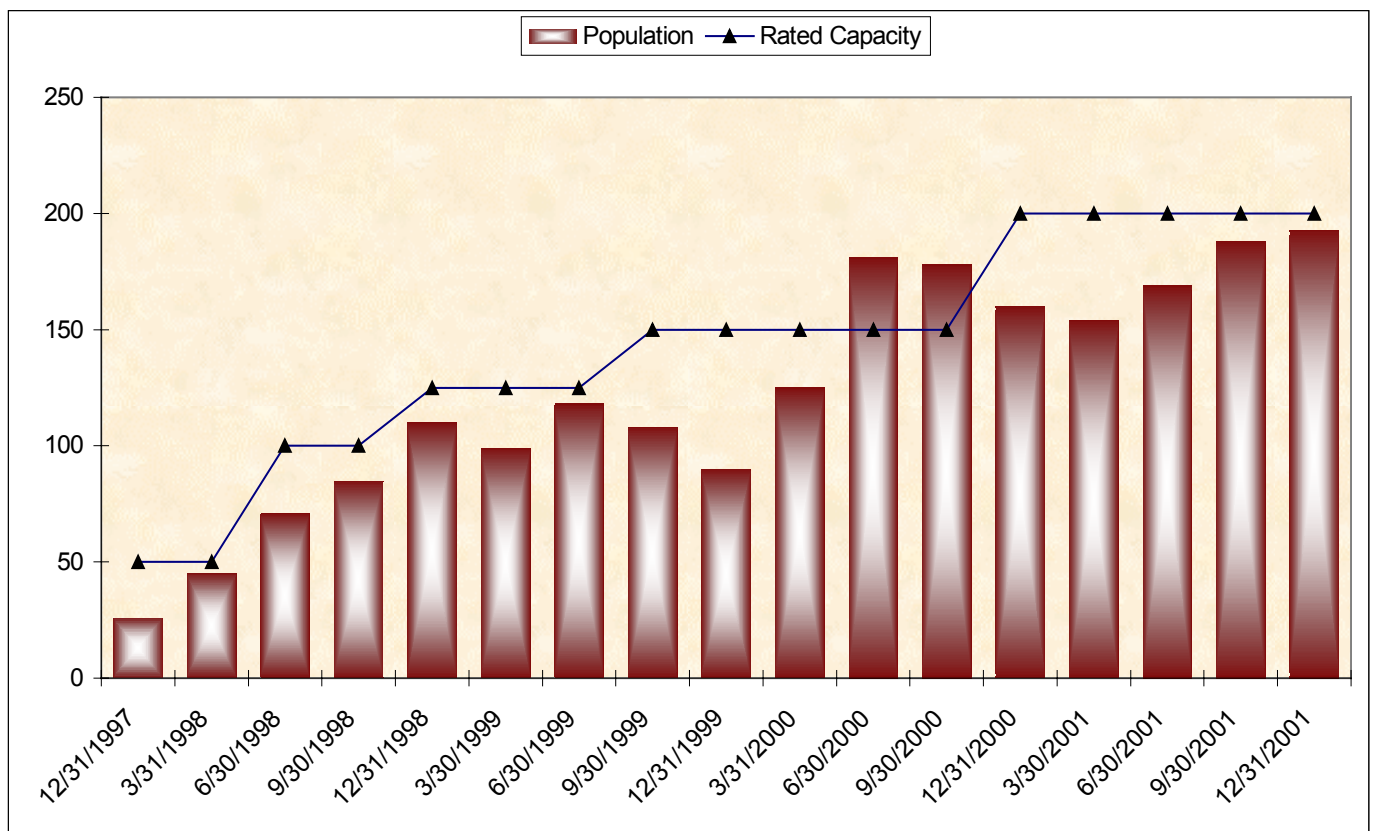
The Elkhorn Correctional Facility Boot Camp has now completed slightly over four years of operation (December 5, 1997 to December 31, 2001) and has continued to maintain a high success rate (85%) for the young men who complete the in-custody and aftercare phases of the programs.

Programming for the cadets committed to Elkhorn remains effective with an on-site quality educational component, mental and medical health services, substance abuse services, victim awareness classes, and a host of activities designed to build character, positive attitude, and community involvement. The military model is still the basic foundation of the program affording the cadets the opportunity to learn discipline and teamwork. The military model also makes it possible for a relatively small number of staff (1 staff member for each 15 cadets) to control up to 200 cadets in a large, open, minimum security facility.

For the past four years, the Probation Department and the staff of the Elkhorn Facility and Aftercare Supervision Program have achieved your Board's mandate to hold young male offenders accountable for their offenses, and at the same time, impart life skills, positive decision making abilities and educational/job development goals to the cadets. With the continued support of your Board and community, the Elkhorn operation will maintain programming to insure that cadets completing the program will have an excellent chance to achieve a productive, crime free lifestyle.

### **History / Status**

Starting with one barracks in late 1997 capable of housing 50 minors, the Boot Camp has now grown to four operational barracks with 50 beds each and a Board of Corrections rated capacity of 200 minors. The first year of operation showed an average daily population of 67 cadets with the second year average increasing to 109 cadets. The third year of operation attained an average of 153 cadets and the just completed fourth year of operation has shown a daily average of 176 cadets. On August 25, 2001, the Elkhorn Facility reached its maximum allowable cadet population of 200 for the first time. The chart below reflects the in-custody population over the past four years and the adjusted rated capacity approved by the Board of Corrections.



Admissions to the Boot Camp were fairly stable during the first two years of operation with 280 minors being committed from December 1997 through the full year of 1998 (13 month period), and 253 minors during calendar year 1999.

In the spring of 2000, the fourth barracks was opened and a sentenced population of minors similar to that previously housed at the C.K. Wakefield School was established and designated as the Delta Program. During calendar year 2000, a total of 335 minors were committed to the Elkhorn Facility with 81 of those minors being housed in the Delta Program barracks. During calendar year 2001, a total of 300 minors were committed to the Elkhorn Facility with 65 being placed in the Delta Program. It is projected that new admissions to Elkhorn in future years will fall between 300 – 340 minors annually barring any significant changes in the length of either the traditional Boot Camp Program or the Delta Program.

In the first three years of operation of the Boot Camp, an average of 19% of the minors committed failed to successfully complete the in-custody phase of the program. Some minors were returned to the Juvenile Hall for an alternative sentence as they had physical or mental health issues which precluded their continued confinement in a rural, minimum security facility. Others were returned to Juvenile Hall as they had committed aggressive / assaultive acts towards other cadets or staff or had demonstrated a serious defiance of authority. In most cases, the young men returned for aggressive behavior were committed to the California Youth Authority as all local options had been exhausted.

In calendar year 2001, a total of 36 cadets constituting 15% of the Boot Camp population and 16 cadets constituting 25% of the Delta Program population were returned to the Juvenile Hall where the Court imposed an alternative sentence. The higher in-custody failure rate for the Delta cadets was an expected consequence of placing older, more hard-core, gang entrenched, criminally sophisticated youth into the Boot

Camp environment. Many of these young men have unfortunately, already adopted a criminal lifestyle and aggressively resist authority and any attempts to correct delinquent behavior. These young men who fail the in-custody phase of the Boot Camp and the Delta Program will in all likelihood, remain in the juvenile and adult justice systems for many years to come.

On the other side of the in-custody failure rate is the high number of Boot Camp cadets who successfully graduate from the facility and complete the Aftercare Supervision phase of the program. The first graduates of the Boot Camp completed their probation in late 1999, and as of December 31, 2002, 691 cadets had been released to Aftercare Supervision status. Of this number, only 106 cadets have been arrested and convicted of committing new criminal offenses. This number constitutes a 15% recidivism rate which is still extremely low when compared to other Boot Camp programs in California and the nation. The breakdown of the recidivism rate for the traditional Boot Camp cadets is 14% while the rate for the Delta Program cadets is 18%. As expected, the recidivism rate for the Delta Program cadets is slightly higher than the traditional Boot Camp cadets and may be directly related to their more extensive exposure and involvement in a criminal lifestyle prior to entering the Boot Camp.

### **Program:**

Programmatic changes have become a common occurrence at Elkhorn over the past four years. Traditional programming such as victim awareness classes, mental health services, substance abuse education and counseling services, gang redirection efforts, and Aftercare Planning sessions involving the cadet and parent(s) continue to provide a strong foundation for cadets to make life changing improvements. Religious groups, volunteers, and students add strength to the teaching of life skills and appropriate behavior.

Community services and off-site community activities such as color guard presentations, parades, and large clean-up projects have also always been a major enrichment component of the Elkhorn Program. Unfortunately during 2001, community activities were scaled back significantly as a result of severe staff shortages. During the spring of 2001, a recommended budget reduction of 50 beds and eleven permanent staff positions was made which compelled the Probation Department to leave vacant positions unfilled to avoid staff layoffs after County budget hearings. During the budget hearing process however, your Board voted unanimously to not approve the recommended reductions to the Elkhorn budget. By that time, however, close to 30% of the Elkhorn child care positions were unfilled and the remaining staff were all working extensive amounts of overtime simply to maintain the legally required Board of Corrections minimum facility staffing patterns. It was not until November and December of 2001 that new permanent staff positions began to come on-line allowing a resumption of off-site community activities.

### **School**

The Fresno County Office of Education operates the accredited Violet Heintz Education Academy at the Elkhorn Facility for the incarcerated cadets and the Forward Bound Academy at Teilman School in Fresno for the Aftercare Supervision cadets. Both sites offer quality educational programs with highly dedicated teachers and support staff. A traditional high school curriculum along with college level computer courses and Special Education classes are offered to meet the needs of the cadets. The educational component in calendar year 2001, produced a total of 32 cadets who attained their high school diploma and 50 cadets who earned a General Equivalency Diploma while attending school at Elkhorn or Teilman. This level of achievement cannot be matched by any county operated juvenile institutional court school program in the nation. In addition, scholarships in the names of former Supervisors Sharon Levy and Stan Oken have now



been awarded to six Elkhorn graduates. All six are still attending college as are many other Elkhorn cadets whose educational “jump start” began at the Elkhorn Boot Camp.

### **Culinary Arts Program**

After a year of planning and the remodeling of the old Bakery of the Elkhorn Kitchen, the Culinary Arts Program is now academically operational. A significant amount of restaurant style and classroom equipment has been donated by County Schools to the Elkhorn Facility and, by the time your Board receives this report, the equipment will be installed and operational. From the first two classes of beginning students, 10 – 14 will move to a four month intermediate course and upon release to Aftercare Supervision, most will be placed in food service internships or attend culinary arts classes at Fresno City College. It is contemplated that 80 – 100 cadets will participate in the Culinary Arts Program during 2002.

### **Youth Incarceration Job Development Program**

The Economic Opportunity Commission was successful in late 2001, in attaining a grant from the Workforce Development Agency to provide job development services for up to 80 Elkhorn cadets. Cadets have been enrolled and attending workshops weekly at the Elkhorn Facility. Upon release from Elkhorn, the EOC staff will continue to work with the cadets placing them on paid, and unpaid, job internships with local businesses. Some cadets will be placed in subsidized schools or apprenticeship programs to improve their educational and employment opportunities.

### **Health and Substance Abuse Services**

The medical clinic staff at Elkhorn was enhanced during 2001 with the addition of one nurse which increases medical coverage on-site until 10:30pm each weekday evening. With a daily average population of close to 180 teenage boys, minor injuries and illnesses are a common occurrence. The medical clinic staff have done an excellent job of caring for the cadets and reduced the need for child-care staff to transport cadets to University Medical Center for treatment.

The mental health staff has likewise been of major importance to the Elkhorn Facility. Their efforts to conduct anger management and self-control classes for cadets along with individual crisis counseling sessions has improved greatly with the construction of new offices and group meeting rooms on the Elkhorn compound. Almost 2000 square feet of new space has become available which the mental health staff share with the substance abuse counselors affiliated with the WestCare Corporation. Both groups of professionals bring much stability to the overall program and offer the cadets insight and the skills needed to alleviate problems.

### **Elkhorn Kitchen**

After an almost two year delay for remodeling, the kitchen at the Elkhorn Facility became operational in October, 2001. The old, cramped kitchen at Juvenile Hall was closed and most of the useable equipment was moved and re-installed at Elkhorn along with several pieces of new equipment. The staff have adjusted well to the Elkhorn Kitchen and found the large, open environment most suitable for the preparation of food for both the Elkhorn cadets and the Juvenile Hall population. As an added benefit, a number of the Elkhorn cadets have been allowed to assist the kitchen staff in preparing meals throughout the day. The kitchen staff have taken great care and pride in teaching the cadets and the cadets have responded with exemplary

behavior. It is anticipated that the Culinary Arts students will, at some future point, find their way into the main kitchen to assist in meal preparation.

### **Farm Program**

Nine varieties of fruit trees and three varieties of table grapes were planted two years ago. The fruit trees and one variety of grapes will produce a small crop this summer for consumption by the cadets.

A vegetable garden of approximately 2 acres was planted last spring. A larger garden would have been planted but staff vacancies severely limited the amount of time staff could spend outside the fence perimeter supervising the cadets. As your Board knows, all the buildings and grounds within the Elkhorn compound are cleaned and maintained exclusively by the cadets under the supervision of staff. With the cadet population holding at close to 180 daily, staff availability to supervise extra activities such as the farm are limited.

### **Future Development and Programming**

The installation of equipment in the Culinary Arts Classroom, the alterations of the cadet food service line in the Dining Hall, and the movement of several items of equipment into the kitchen, are in the final stages of completion at Elkhorn. General maintenance repairs in the four barracks and additional venting and insulation on the barracks roofs are the only projects still pending. No building remodeling or new construction is anticipated in the coming year.

In regards to programming, both the Boot Camp and the Aftercare Supervision Program are stable. The cadets and staff are kept occupied throughout the day with the components currently in place. While each program component requires constant monitoring and fine tuning to remain effective, it would require reduction or elimination of existing components to add anything new. Adjustments in current programming should therefore not be expected unless major changes in cadet profiles, staffing patterns, or program length occur.

### **Contact Person**

For specific or additional information, contact Larry R. Price, Chief Probation Officer (559) 488-3640.

## **Fresno County Grand Jury Report 2001/2002 Elkhorn Correctional Facility**

### **Introduction**

The 2001/2002 Fresno County Grand Jury followed up on the recommendation of the 2000/2001 Grand Jury to monitor the operations of the Elkhorn Correctional Facility (Juvenile Boot Camp). The Grand Jury toured the Elkhorn Correctional Facility (Elkhorn) on November 16, 2001. The director and support staff provided a briefing on the history of Elkhorn and goals of the program. The introduction of new juvenile offenders into the cadet program was observed by Grand Jury members.

### **Findings**

- A. Elkhorn is operated under the Fresno County Probation Department
  - B. The hiring of Group Counselor staff for Elkhorn is a lengthy process; reference 2001/2002 Fresno County Grand Jury report – *Fresno County Personnel Department*. Group Counselors are the individuals that constantly interact with Elkhorn Cadets.
  - C. Elkhorn is a large minimum security facility located in rural Fresno County. This facility houses two categories of juveniles: regular Boot Camp cadets and Delta Program cadets.
  - D. The basic function of the program uses the military model of discipline and teamwork. Support programs include medical and mental health, education, substance abuse, victim awareness, job training, and counseling. All efforts of the program are designed to provide adolescents with an improved chance to become productive citizens.
  - E. Both the on-site Heintz School and off-site Forward Bound Academy at Teilman School provide educational programs for cadets. This past year thirty-two cadets received High School Diplomas and fifty cadets received Graduate Equivalency Diplomas.
  - F. Upon graduation from Boot Camp, aftercare planning is initiated; this includes both cadet and parental sessions to provide a strong foundation for cadets to make life changing improvements.
  - G. A Culinary Arts program has been instituted at the Elkhorn campus. It is projected that 80-100 cadets will participate in the program during 2002.
  - H. A grant from the Workforce Development Agency is providing job development services for cadets at Elkhorn.
  - I. The Elkhorn kitchen remodel was completed in October of 2001. Meals for both Juvenile Hall and Elkhorn are prepared daily with the help of the cadets.

- J. There are currently four barracks in the facility, each with 50 beds. The average daily census this last year was 176 cadets, reaching the maximum allowance of 200 cadets in August of 2001.
- K. The Delta program cadets are separated from the regular Boot Camp population. Offenders in the Delta Program are those who have:
- Been convicted of three or more separate offenses.
  - Served previous confinement periods.
  - Been boot camp failures
  - A conviction for a violent offense.
- L. The Probation Department met with the surrounding community to address the issue of the Delta Program.
- M. The State of California requires a minimum of one staff member for each fifteen cadets.
- N. As a result of a proposed reduction of 50 beds and 11 permanent staff positions in the 2001/2002 county budget, vacant positions were left unfilled. Subsequently the County Board of Supervisors voted against the reduction. This left Elkhorn with 30% of its staff positions unfilled. The remaining staff worked extensive overtime to maintain the State required staffing patterns.
- O. The recidivism rate (re-arrest and conviction on a new misdemeanor or felony offense) for many boot camps throughout the country is estimated at 50%. The March 2002 Probation Department report noted that the recidivism rate for cadets successfully completing the Fresno County Boot Camp Program was 14% for regular Boot Camp cadets and 18% for cadets completing the Delta Program.
- P. There are no females housed at the Elkhorn Boot Camp. The County of Fresno has an agreement with Madera County to house 10 females at their Boot Camp facility.
- Q. The majority of cadets (approximately 80%) at Elkhorn come from the City of Fresno.
- R. The City of Fresno funds Elkhorn at the rate of one million dollars per year, which represents approximately 25% of the yearly costs to operate Elkhorn. This funding commitment of the City of Fresno is scheduled to expire (sunset) in December of 2004.
- S. The County Probation Department has volunteer programs; few meet the unique needs of Elkhorn.
- T. The Director of Elkhorn Correctional Facility retired in April of 2002.
- U. The Director's position has been filled with a temporary appointment.



## **Conclusions**

- A. The basic philosophy that established the programs over the past four years for the Elkhorn facility has been very successful and must be continued.
- B. The school programs have attained a high level of achievement in the past calendar year.
- C. Programs such as Culinary Arts and Workforce Development provide positive training and skills for the cadets leading to opportunities for personal growth and social development, increasing employment opportunities.
- D. The current 200 bed capacity is the maximum under which this facility can effectively operate.
- E. Elkhorn has met with the Caruthers community to address the Delta cadet profile issues; the community has expressed its satisfaction with the current program.
- F. Group Counselor positions had a vacancy rate of 30% in the spring of 2001. This, together with the intense nature of the job increased overtime, lead to staff burnout, resignations, and cancellation of a few of the offsite activities for cadets. In some cases, less vigilant supervision of cadets led to their sub-optimal performance.
- G. The delay in filling these vacant staff positions is due in part to the cumbersome and lengthy personnel hiring rules and regulations; reference 2001/2002 Fresno County Grand Jury report – Fresno County Personnel Department.
- H. The recidivism rate for many boot camps throughout the country is reported to be as high as 50%, whereas in March 2001, the recidivism rate was 12% from the Elkhorn Boot Camp Program. This year, as of March 2002, the recidivism rate was 14%.
- I. Volunteers are needed with expertise in specialized areas such as farming and other vocational skills.

## **Recommendation**

The 2001/2002 Fresno County Grand Jury recommends that:

- 47. The new director of Elkhorn Correctional Facility continue the current philosophy and maintain the established programs that have been successful.
- 48. Fresno County continue to fund and maintain the present high level of services at Elkhorn Correctional Facility.
- 49. The City of Fresno continue to fund the Elkhorn Correctional Facility at no less than the current rate of one million dollars per year and eliminate the December 2004 sunset date.

50. Fresno County Personnel Department establish a system to streamline the hiring process of Group Counselors prior to background checks.
51. The Probation Department expedite the background investigations procedures.
52. The Probation Department actively promote in the community the need for volunteers with vocational skills including agricultural expertise, providing a broader farming experience for the cadets.
53. The Chief Probation Officer continue monitoring the recidivism rates and statistics on cadet performance in aftercare programs.
54. Future Fresno County Grand Juries continue to monitor the activities at the Elkhorn Correctional Facility, the on-site Heintz School, and the off-site Forward Bound Academy at Teilman School.